

Activity #6: Strategies for Social Competence

Section 4: Social Competence

GROUP 1: Strategies Involving the Physical Setup of Your Classroom

- Arrange furniture to provide spaces for cooperative and individual play
- Set up centers to encourage children to work and play together
- Provide a physical space for conflict resolution
- Post steps for conflict resolution, using photographs or pictures to illustrate; provide tools such as solution cards or talking sticks

Strategies Involving Materials in Your Classroom

- Model proper care and cleanup of materials

GROUP 2: Strategies to Use with Groups of Children

- Assign helper jobs
- Involve children in classroom decisions
- Discuss read alouds: Have children talk about social situations and how they were or could be handled, including possible solutions to problems
- Model social situations using puppets or role-playing (e.g., initiating play, sharing a toy, taking turns, asking for help, sharing feelings, solving a problem)
- Play with children to model appropriate behavior
- Play games to show things hands can do instead of hitting
- Design activities to encourage partner work and play
- Group children with low social skills together with children who are more socially competent
- Present problems to the class (e.g., not enough balls) for solution brainstorming
- Play "How would you feel if...?"
- Model concern for others; involve children in creating cards and signs for appropriate occasions
- Use conflict situations as "teachable moments" to help children practice resolving disagreements non-aggressively

GROUP 3: Strategies to Use with Individual Children

- Greet children by name and say goodbye warmly each day
- Have conversations with children, asking questions and allowing wait time; remember to incorporate important events in the child's life
- Get down on the child's level when interacting
- Display appropriate physical affection (e.g., high fives, pats on the back, special handshakes, hugs)
- Give positive feedback (verbal and nonverbal) for accomplishments and for successful interactions
- Acknowledge difficult days with encouragement
- Use notes, phone calls, and home visits to develop a positive relationship with parents
- Play with children to model appropriate behavior
- Create opportunities for individual children to share about themselves ("student of the week," sharing favorite books, bringing pets, etc.)
- Encourage children to initiate social interactions; provide stems or entire phrases as needed; help them enter play situations
- Provide physical or verbal cues to help children negotiate social situations, including "stop/go" behaviors (using red/green signals if needed)
- Prime children for social situations prior to their involvement
- Coach children to consider the consequences of their actions; in particular, focus on the feelings of others